

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ARAE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3844

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

DIA/DOD WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 8233

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, AR

SUBJECT: FURTHER ANALYSIS OF ARGENTINE TURMOIL

REF: (A) BA 8055; (B) BA 7681; (C) BA 7229; (D) BA 6087;

(E) A-248 OF DECEMBER 1, 1975

1. SUMMARY: ODDS ARE STILL ON THE SIDE OF AMILITARY TAKEOVER --
EVEN IF IT TAKS PLACE AFTER FIRST OF YEAR--UNLESS CIVILIAN
POLITICIANS CAN COME UP WITH A SOLUTION OF THEIR OWN. CIVILIANS
CONTINUE TO TALK OF VARIOUS SCENARIOS WHICH MIGHT PRODUCE SUCH
SOLUTION BUT SINCE SO FAR ALL SEEM TO HINGE ON MRS. PERON'S
VOLUNTARILY RESIGNING OR TAKING BACK SEAT--WHICH SHE GIVES NO
EVIDENCE OF BEING WILLING TO DO--NONE CAN YET BE TAKEN VERY
SERIOUSLY. WHETHER COUNTRY GETS THROUGH TO ELECTIONS OR WHETHER
MILITARY TAKE OVER, A NEW AND DANGEROUS INGREDIENT IS SEEN IN
GORWING ALIENATION OF LABOR RANK AND FILE FROM LEADERSHIP AND IN
EFFORTS OF EXTREME LEFT TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RESULTING GAP.
CHANCES THAT EXTEME LEFT JUST MIGHT HAVE FUTURE OPPORTUNITY TO
SEIZE POWER ARE THUS ENHANCED. END SUMMARY.

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2. EVER SINCE LOPEZ REGA WAS OUSTED IN JULY, MRS. PERON'S DAYS HAVE SEEMED TO BE NUMBERED. WHILE ONE COULD SPEAK OF A POWER VACUUM EVEN PRIOR TO HER ENTRY INTO THE HOSPITAL ON NOVEMBER 3, SUBSEQUENT TO THAT DATE IT HAS BECOME NEAR COMPLETE. MRS. PERON DISPLAYS MORE INSoucIANCE THAN CONCERN. SHE IS SPENDING ONLY A FEW HOURS PER WEEK AT THE CASA ROSADA AND HAS LEFT THE GOVERNMENT VIRTUALLY PARALYZED. AS ONE VISITING AMERICAN NEWSMAN PUT IT ONLY HALF IN JEST: "THERE HAS BEEN NO GOVERNMENT IN ARGENTINA FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS. THUS, IF THE COUNTRY GETS THROUGH TO ELECTIONS WITH MRS. PERON STILL IN OFFICE THAT WILL SIMPLY PROVE THAT IT DOESN'T NEED A GOVERNMENT, SO WHY HOLD ELECTIONS AT ALL?"

3. WITH THE VACUUM HAVING BECOME SO MARKED, BY ALL LOGIC THE OTHER SHOE SHOULD HAVE DROPPED SOME TIME AGO--I.E., THE DYNAMICS OF THE SITUATION SHOULD HAVE LED MRS. PERON TO RESIGN OR SHOULD HAVE LED TO HER OUSTER. THAT THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED--AT LEAST NOT YET--IS EVIDENCE OF AN ENCOURAGING CHANGE IN ATTITUDES. IT DEMONSTRATES A STRONGER WILL TOWARD CONSTITUTIONALISM THAN EXISTED IN THE PAST, AND IT SHOWS THAT THE ARGENTINE MILITARY HAVE MATURED. WERE THIS TEN YEARS AGO, THERE WOULD HAVE LONG AGO BEEN TANKS IN THE STREETS AND A GENERAL IN THE CASA ROSADA. BUT TODAY, THEY ARE RESISTING THE TEMPTATION TO INTERVENE, NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY WERE BADLY BURNED IN THE 1966-73 PERIOD AND DO NOT WANT TO REASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOVERNING THE COUNTRY, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY TOO WISH TO STAY WITHIN THE CONSTITUTIONAL BOUNDS.

4. A GREATER WILL TOWARD CONSTITUTIONALISM DOES NOT, HOWEVER, FILL OR ALTER THE EXISTING VACUUM OF POWER--AND THAT VACCUM CANNOT CONTINUE INDEFINITELY. THE ARMED FORCES WOULD PREFER A CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION, BUT IN THE ABSENCE OF ONE, THEY WILL PROBABLY STEP IN THEMSELVES. THE DECISION OF THE DECEMBER 5 MEETING OF GENERAL OFFICERS TO HOLD OFF FOR NOW APPARENTLY WAS EVEN MORE TENOUOUS IN NATURE THAN IT APPEARED AT THE TIME (SEE REF A). SEVERAL MILITARY CONTACTS, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY DOWNPLAYED THE POSSIBILITY OF A COUP, HAVE, SINCE DECEMBER 5, SUDDENLY SHIFTED OVER TO DESCRIBING A COUP AS "INEVITABLE." TIMING HAS NOT YET BEEN DETERMINED, BUT MOST OBSERVERS EXPECT THE MILITARY TO ACT BEFORE MARCH. THE THEORY ADVANCED BY SOME OBSERVERS THAT THE MILITARY WILL NOT INTERVENE IN WHAT MAY BE AN ELECTION YEAR OVER-

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LOOKS THE FACT THAT THE MILITARY ARE BEGINNING TO HAVE GRAVE DOUBTS THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD SOLVE ANYTHING ANYWAY. THEY, AND MANY OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, ARE REACHING THE CONCLUSION THAT NO MATTER HOW MUCH PERONISM FRAGMENTS, ONE OR ANOTHER OF ITS SEGMENTS WOULD PROBABLY WIN THE NEXT ELECTIONS, NOT WITH 62 PERCENT OF THE VOTE AS IN SEPTEMBER OF 1973, BUT WITH 30 PERCENT OR SO, WHICH WOULD STILL BE MORE THAN THE UCR'S TRADITIONAL 25 PERCENT. THUS, ONE LT. COL. RECENTLY REMARKED TO EMBOFF. "WHY WAIT UNTIL

ELECTIONS WHICH WILL SIMPLY PERPETUATE THE FAILURE WHICH IS
ALREADY APPARENT? BETTER TO MOVE NOW."

5. THE ODDS, THEN, REMAIN IN FAVOR OF MILITARY INTERVENTION,
UNLESS RPT UNLESS THE CIVILIAN POLITICANS ARE ABLE TO PRODUCE
SOME KIND OF SOLUTION OR MECHANISM TO FILL THE VACUUM. AS THE
UCR'S ANTONIO TROCCOLI PUT IT TO EMBOFF SEVERAL DAYS AGO: "WE
MUST HAVE A CARD OF OUR OWN TO PLAY IF WE ARE TO KEEP THE MILITARY
FROM CLAIMING THE POT." UNTIL NOVEMBER 17, THE CIVILIAN POLITI-
CIANS HAD SEEMED ON THE VERGE OF PLAYING SUCH A CARD--I.E., BY
DEMANDING THAT MRS. PERON STEP ASIDE. SHE DISARMED THAT INITIA-
TIVE (SEE REF B) AND A NEW ONE HAS NOT YET DEVELOPED. ONE MAY BE,
IN THE FORM OF AN EFFORT ON THE PART OF THE PERONISTS TO HEAL
THEIR SPLITS AND LEVER MRS. PERON TO ONE SIDE. RAUL LASTIRI
LAST WEEK MET SECRETLY WITH ANTIVERTICALISTA LEADERS ENRIQUE
OSELLA MUNOZ AND LUIS RUBEO TO DISCUSS HOW THIS MIGHT BE DONE.
ACCORDING TO A WELL PLACED PERONIST WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE MEET-
ING, LASTIRI AGREED TO BRING LORENZO MIGUEL INTO THE EFFORT AND,
AGAIN ACCORDING TO SOURCE, LATTER SUBSEQUENTLY ACCEPTED. WE
NOTE THAT JUST AFTER THIS LORENZO MIGUEL INSTRUCTED LABOR
DEPUTIES IN CONGRESS TO TRY TO MAKE PEACE WITH AND REINTEGRATE
THE BREAK-AWAY "WORKING GROUP."

6. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, MAIN OUTLINE OF "SOLUTION" DISCUSSED BY
LASTIRI AND OSELLA MUNOZ WOULD BE FOLLOWING: A) VERTICALISTAS
WOULD AGREE TO ANTIVERTICALISTA DEMANDS THAT DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS
BE HELD WITHIN PERONIST PARTY THIS SPRING AND OFFICERS ELECTED
BY MEMBERS THEMSELVES RATHER THAN NAMED FROM ABOVE AS IN THE PAST.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 8233

B) ENTIRE CABINET WILL BE CHANGED AND FIGURES RESPECTED BY BOTH SIDES WILL BE NAMED TO REPLACE PRESENT INCUMBENTS. C) MRS. PERON MUST EITHER GO ON LEAVE OR LONG MISSION ABROAD, OR SHE MUST ACCEPT CEREMONIAL ROLE WHILE REAL EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED BY A COUNCIL OF ADVISORS MADE UP OF MOST EMINENT AND RESPECTED PERONISTS SUCH AS ALBERTO ROCAMORA AND ROBERTO ARES; AND D) CONSENSUS BASED ON DIALOGUE WITH OTHER PARTIES--AND ESPECIALLY WITH UCR--MUST AGAIN BECOME KEYSTONE OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES. SOURCE DESCRIBED UCR'S BALBIN AS NOT ONLY PRIVY TO BUT AS A "SILENT PARTNER" IN THE LASTIRI-OSELLA MUNOZ INITIATIVE.

7. IF THE STEPS DESCRIBED ABOVE COULD IN FACT BE TAKEN THEY MIGHT PRODUCE A VIABLE SITUATION. AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, ONE CANNOT BE OVERLY SANGUINE CONCERNING THE PROSPECTS. DIVISIONS AND ANIMOSITIES ARE DEEP AND WILL NOT BE EASILY OVERCOME. INDEED, MANY OBSERVERS DOUBT THAT THEY CAN BE OVERCOME AT ALL AT THIS POINT, MOREOVER, WHILE LASTIRI MAY BE AMENABLE, OTHER VERTICALISTAS MAY NOT BE. SOURCE INSISTED THAT LASTIRI HAD TALKED TO MRS. PERON ABOUT THE PROJECT, BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT SHE SUPPORTS IT AND WOULD BE WILLING TO ACQUIESCE. IF SHE IS NOT, THEN THIS SCHEME, AS HAVE PREVIOUS ONES, WOULD FOUNDER
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ON MRS. PERON'S OWN STUBBORNESS.

8. WHETHER THE CIVILIANS ARE ABLE TO FORGE A SOLUTION AND MANAGE TO MAKE IT THROUGH TO ELECTIONS, OR WHETHER THE MILITARY TAKE OVER, AS AT THIS POINT SEEMS MORE LIKELY, THERE IS ONE INGREDIENT WHICH MAY PRODUCE A MORE UNSTABLE AND DANGEROUS SITUATION THAN FORESEEN IN OUR LAST MAJOR ASSESSMENTS (SEE REFS C AND D). THAT IS, LABOR CAN NO LONGER BE COUNTED ON TO FOLLOW THE DECISIONS AND POLICIES OF ITS LEADERS. INCREASINGLY, THERE IS A GAP BETWEEN THE LEADERS AND THE RANK AND FILE, AND, AS INDICATED IN REF E (A-248 IS A KEY DOCUMENT AND SHOULD BE READ CAREFULLY, EVEN THOUGH IT IS AN AIRGRAM), THE FAR LEFT IS TRYING, WITH SOME SUCCESS, TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS VOID. THUS, SHOULD THE MILITARY TAKE OVER, THEY MIGHT WELL NOT BE ABLE TO CONTROL LABOR SIMPLY BY MAKING A DEAL WITH THE LEADERS, AS THEY DID IN 1966. THEY MAY HAVE TO USE FORCE. CIVILIAN LEADERS, EVEN BE THEY PERONISTS, MAY FIND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO CONTROL LABOR AT ALL. FURTHER, LEFTIST INROADS IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT WOULD CERTAINLY INCREASE THE CHANCES THAT THE FAR LEFT MIGHT BE ABLE TO EXPLOIT THE FRUSTRATIONS AND INCREASED DIVISIONS WHICH WOULD RESULT SHOULD THE ARMED FORCES

TOO, AFTER HAVING TAKEN POWER, FAIL TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE
COUNTRY'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS--I.E., SHOULD THEY NOT
RULE WELL.

9. AS STATED IN REF D, THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EXTREME LEFTIST
TAKEOVER IS STILL SEVERAL STEPS FURTHER ALONG THE ROAD--AND IT
IS STILL ONLY A POSSIBILITY. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF THE SITUATION
DESCRIBED IN A-248, IT DOES NOT SEEM SO REMOTE A POSSIBILITY. ON
THE CONTRARY, IT IS ONE WHICH MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND WATCHED
MOST CAREFULLY.
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